TO: Faculty Senate
FROM: Mary Jo Ondrechen, Secretary, Faculty Senate
SUBJECT: Minutes, 11 December 2013

Present: (Professors) Board, Carrier, Cokely, De Ritis, Fitzgerald, Fox, Garcia, Gouldstone, King, Kruger, Lee, Lefkovitz, Metghalchi, Ondrechen, Parekh, Rabrenovic, Rappaport, Sceppa, Stepanyants, Strasser, Strauss, Yang

(Administrators) Aubry, Costa, Courtney, Director, Finkelstein, Fulmer, Gibson, Loeffelholz, Poiger, Ronkin

Absent: Professors Basagni, Craig, Daynard, Fountain, Makriyannis, Nelson, Noubir, Piret,

The Senate convened at 11:47 AM

I. In Professor Daynard’s absence, Professor Ondrechen provided the following report from the SAC.

SAC met three times in regular session and once with the Provost since the last Senate meeting.

SAC has been asked to convene several search committees. One is for a chair of the newly formed Department of Bioengineering in the College of Engineering. An election has been scheduled. Another is for a committee to make a candid evaluation of the qualifications and potential of a specific candidate who is being considered for the position of Dean of the School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs. An election is being scheduled. And finally, a search committee is needed for a chair of the Department of Pharmacy Science. An election has been scheduled.

SAC has received inquiries about the changes to the Co-op preparatory course curriculum and the mechanism for faculty input to these changes. There will be pilots that incorporate new material on learning in some of these courses in the spring semester. Based on the outcomes of these pilots, the faculty in the individual units will have the opportunity to review the possible models for inclusion of new material and make a recommendation that is appropriate to the unit’s discipline. The Provost and the Provost’s Office staff have agreed to this.

A proposal to change the policy pertaining to the point in the semester when a student may drop a course and receive a W grade is in circulation. This is a policy matter and will need a Senate vote before being implemented.

In the course of Senate discussion of the tenure and promotion procedures for interdisciplinary faculty members, it was pointed out that there are discrepancies between the Tenure module of the Faculty Handbook and the Model Tenure Dossier written made available by the Provost’s Office. The Faculty Handbook Committee, consisting of
Professors Gerald Herman and George Adams, compared the two documents and submitted a report with recommendations. SAC, Provost Director and Vice Provost Loeffelholz discussed the report and agreed that changes in wording will be made in the Model Tenure Dossier to bring the two documents into alignment. It should be noted that SAC reviews the Model Tenure Dossier each year and these inconsistencies were not caught until now. Thanks to those who contributed to the resolution of this matter.

II. Provost Director reported that changes to the investment accounts line-up have been made which require action in some cases. Employees are directed to the HRM website. Note that there is limited time to take action to avoid conversion of funds to default designations.

III. Questions and discussion. Professor Ondrechen noted that a significant number of Fidelity funds are no longer in the line-up and can only be purchased in the Brokerage Link account; these funds will convert from institutional class to retail class, which will result in higher management fees and slightly lower returns. Ms. Lisa Broderick, Benefits Manager/HRM, responded that there is opportunity to use other funds and alleged that change in regulations precipitated the changes.

Professor Strauss urged those present to read a current New York Times article on “moocs” which shows how poorly they have fared. Less than twelve percent of those who registered actually opened a portal and viewed the materials and less than two percent finished the course.

Professor Ondrechen requested that the Provost reaffirm that the faculty controls the curriculum. Provost Director, noting that the request is odd since it is well-known that the faculty owns the curriculum, said that the University will continue to push for educational and curriculum reform; that everyone has an obligation to review curricula and how courses are delivered, and to take advantage of resources; and that faculty are of course responsible for the curriculum. Professor Ondrechen noted that questions on the matter had arisen as a result of the Co-op curriculum changes mentioned earlier in the SAC report.

Professor Fox wondered how aggressively it is being advertised that finals are not to be held during the last week of classes and why is there a ‘no more than 30 minutes’ rule? Perhaps there should be no exams at all?

Provost Director noted that department chairs and deans can monitor this issue. Vice Provost Loeffelholz suggested that final exams be specified on syllabi and reported that the Registrar’s Office keeps record of final exams assigned. Professor Fox suggested that a report of the prevalence of early final exams could show any significant problems.

IV. Report and recommendations of the Senate Committee for Financial Affairs. Professor Stepanyak read the following and it was seconded:

**BE IT RESOLVED That the Faculty Senate support the recommendation of the Financial Affairs Committee for a merit raise pool in the fiscal year 2015, effective 1 July 2014.**

Professor Isaacs was recognized and proceeded to report the following. This report may be found at the Faculty Senate website.
Included in raise pool considerations were academic and financial trends; value and cost of salaries; and matchmate comparisons. Higher education faces market uncertainties but NU possesses significant financial and academic strengths. Its financial strengths are steady increases in tuition and enrollments. Professor Isaacs clarified that tuition rates shown do not include the discount rate but that it could be considered in the future. Other strengths are NU’s ranking and the mean SAT scores.

Faculty salaries are essential to retaining quality faculty and in hiring. USNWR calculates approximately 20% of rankings constitute resources of which 35% is faculty salaries.

A comparison of faculty by rank with matchmate institutions shows that full professors’ rates are stable and in the middle and there are increases among associate and assistant professors. Thus gains are focused more on associate and assistant professors. AAUC conflicting data show NU lagging for which the Committee has no good explanation as yet.

The inflation rate for 2014 is predicted at 2.0% which could suggest a lower merit rate proposal. However, justification for the Committee’s higher recommendation is as follows: NU salary gains have only recently allowed some ranks to catch up, while other ranks remain no better than median; AAUP data indicate that NU increases continue to lag as compared to matchmate institutions; NU faculty salary increases have been the engine of growth and success; and NU faculty salaries are growing much more slowly than overall University costs.

For these reasons, FAC recommends a raise pool of 3.5% to address longer-term salary issues and to strengthen NU’s educational mission. NU is in a strong financial position; strong resources are necessary to attract and retain faculty; the recommendation addresses the continuing gap and enhances NU’s competitive position at modest cost. Questions ensued.

Dean Gibson noted that salaries are driving the increasing costs of tuition to which Professor Fitzgerald added that this is the case across the country.

Professor Strauss noted that faculty lines have been added [at NU] but much greater increases in administrative costs have been experienced at this university. Overall costs need examination but this is a recommendation for the faculty merit pool. Perhaps there is a need to examine the division between administrative and faculty salaries and the composition of the University.

Professor Kruger asked for explanations of the conflicting data whereupon Vice Provost Loeffelholz noted that NU is hiring greater numbers at the associate and assistant levels which accounts for the matchmate data. Full professors kept pace with matchmate institutions; this is not seen as a conflict.

Professor Ondrechen proposed a friendly amendment to include the proposed 3.5% in the wording of the resolution. This was accepted by Professor Stepanyants.

Professor Rappaport asked whether there is indication of administrators’ salaries affecting rankings. Professor Kwoka, FAC member, was recognized and responded that administrators’ salaries are not figured into the rankings and that faculty salaries are a subset of resources.
Professor Fox proposed that “at least” be added to the resolution. Professor Stepanyants accepted this friendly amendment.

As amended, the resolution is as follows:

BE IT RESOLVED That the Faculty Senate support the recommendation of the Financial Affairs Committee for a merit raise pool of at least 3.5% in the fiscal year 2015, effective 1 July 2014.

VOTE to accept the FAC recommendation for at least a 3.5% merit increase pool: PASSED, 21-6-2.

V. Workload policy. Professor Ondrechen move to postpone this item indefinitely as several people raised concerns and SAC determined that it was fair to discuss these objections before a Senate vote.

VOTE to postpone indefinitely: PASSED, 29-0-1

VI. Sense of the Senate. Professor Ondrechen read the following and it was seconded.

BE IT RESOLVED That it is the sense of the Faculty Senate that senators serve as ambassadors for the Faculty Giving Initiative and make faculty in their respective College units aware of the Faculty Giving Initiative. The Senate encourages faculty members to pledge support for programs and resources that are of special importance to them.

Several senators spoke in favor.

PASSED: 29-0-0

The Senate adjourned at 12:32 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Jo Ondrechen, Secretary
Faculty Senate